

ORDER IS HEAVEN'S FIRST LAW

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*“Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path.”
Joel 2:8*

THOSE who have been able to observe the marching of an army of locusts have been amazed beyond measure with the marvelous regularity of their advance. Agur, who must surely have seen them, says, “The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands.” The wonder is that creatures comparatively so insignificant in size, and so low down in the scale of intelligence, should maintain such more than martial order, both in their long flights and in their devouring marches.

The ablest commanding officers would be at their wits' end if ordered to marshal a multitude numbering even a thousandth, or perhaps a millionth part of the countless hordes of these destructive marauders, and yet, by instinct, the locust soldiery can and do keep rank better than the most veteran regiments of the line, as I can personally testify, from having seen miles of them in one of the Italian valleys. “They shall march every one on his ways,” says the prophet, “and they shall not break their ranks: neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk everyone in his path.”

I. As I considered this remarkable fact in insect life, my meditations led me to note THE ORDER WHICH REIGNS, not amongst locusts only, but THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE OF GOD'S WORLD, and then I said within myself—after this fashion should there be order and arrangement in the Christian church.

God has trained His great insect army, and among them order reigns, but this is no exception to the general rule, for all the hosts of God are marshaled in rank and file, and are never left to be a disorganized mob of forces. From the most minute to the most magnificent, all creatures feel the sway of order, and they well observe the laws imposed by their Creator.

Look up to the heavens, and observe the innumerable stars that glisten there so plenteously, that numeration fails. Looked at through the telescope, stars are so abundant that the heavens appear to be covered with dust of gold, and yet we have no record that one of these bodies has ever interfered with the orbit of its fellow sphere, or if such a catastrophe has ever been permitted, it has been part of the all-comprehending scheme. The majestic orbs move, each one in its own orbit, and all in perfect harmony.

Even the aberrations, as we call them, are nothing but the result of regular law, and the astronomer finds that he can calculate them with the greatest possible accuracy. There are no irregularities, discords, or failures among the constellations, and if to the student of the heavens such should appear to be the case, he has but more fully to master the universal law, and he discovers, with astonishment, that every eccentricity is a necessary incident in a system grander than he had thought.

Mere tyros in astronomy talked of irregularities, but Newton and Kepler found a mathematical precision manifest in all. At no point need we be afraid that the universe will be thrown out of gear.

If a man had placed innumerable wheels in a machine, there would be, in due time, a breakdown somewhere. Oil would be wanted here, a cog would be broken there, a band would be snapped in this place, or a piston would be immovable there, but God's great machine of the universe, whose wheels are so high that the sublime Ezekiel, when he saw them, felt that they were terrible, has continued to revolve these many thousands, perhaps millions, of years, and has never yet been stopped for cleaning or repair, because God has impressed upon every atom of it the most docile spirit of submission, and His powerful hand is at work every instant amidst the machinery giving force to His laws.

Nor is it so in the coarser inanimate forms of matter only, but *the same law holds good with the whole animal creation*. Not locusts alone, but the fish of the sea, and the birds of the air, all observe their Maker's bidding, and both live and move according to rule and order, all forming portions of the perfect circle struck out by the divine compasses.

What a wonderful thing it is that mighty streams of fish should come, during certain seasons, from the North, and swim near enough to our coasts to afford our fellow citizens so large a portion of their daily food! If there be complaining in our streets, there need not be, for extended fisheries could supply all the inhabitants of Britain, even if they were multiplied a hundred times, and yet there would be no perceptible declining in the teeming population of all the sea, for God has so arranged it that there shall be most of those kinds which are most required for food.

But what a marvel that at the fixed period, the unguided fish should migrate in such countless shoals, and should return again in due season, to their old abodes among the Arctic waves!

Mark too, how every tribe of animals is needful to all the rest. So beautiful is the order of nature that we cannot wantonly destroy a race of little birds without suffering from their removal. When the small birds were killed in France by the peasantry, who supposed that they ate the corn, the caterpillars came and devoured the crops. Man made a defect in an otherwise perfect circle, he took away one of the wheels which God had made, and the machine did not work perfectly, but let it alone, and no jars or grindings will occur, for all animals know their time and place, and fulfill the end of their being.

You spoil the harmony of nature's concert if even the sparrow's chirrup is unheard. The stork and the crane fly at God's bidding, the swallow and the martin know their pathway, the prowling beasts and rapacious birds, as well as the domestic cattle, all hold their own in nature's arrangements.

Like the bejeweled breastplate of the high priest, nature is full of gems, each one in its setting, and the glory is marred if one be wanting. Be assured that the wild ass and coney, leviathan and behemoth, eagle and dove, gnat and lizard, are all arranged for the highest good, and are beautiful in their season. "Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path."

Rising a little higher, *there is also order in the providence of God*. When you view the great world of human history, it looks like a skein of thread much twisted and tangled. When you study it, you see nations rise and fall, like boiling waves of a foaming sea. You read of horrible wars, wantonly commenced and wickedly continued. The human race seems to have destroyed its sons without a motive. Men rush upon each other with all the fury of fiends, and tear each other like wolves, and yet they eat not that which they have killed.

The history of mankind appears at first sight to argue the absence of God. We ask, "How is this? We expected to find, if God were in providence, something more orderly and regular than we see here. Instead of a grand volume from a master-pen, we see words flung together without apparent connection. We expected to find a sublime poem, such as angels might love to read, but all this is confusion, void and unintelligible—strokes and dashes without meaning to us." Ay, my brethren, and so it is, but we are little children and do not yet understand God's hieroglyphics, we write in large text, and have not the transcript of the celestial shorthand.

Our limited field of vision only lets us see a brick or two of the great house, and straightway we begin to criticize the infinite Architect and His work. After all, supposing this world to have existed six thousand years, what is that? In God's sight, it is but as a day, or as yesterday when it has passed. We see but one thread of history, a raveling of life, and then we vainly fancy that we can form a fair judgment of the tapestry curiously fashioned by the finger of the Lord.

Coming down from these great things to ourselves, *depend upon it that all the events in our own little lives are marching straight on to a gracious consummation*. You, child of God, sometimes say, "What can be the design of this cross? What can be meant by that bereavement? Why am I perplexed by this dilemma? Why is this difficulty piled like a barricade across my path? Well, you know not now, but you shall know hereafter, meanwhile, settle it firmly in your faith that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

Your affliction does not jostle your prosperity, but promotes it. Your losses do not cause your loss, they really increase your true riches. Onward still, laden with untold blessings, every event is marching for the righteous and for the humble spirit. God has His way in the whirlwind, and the clouds are the dust of His feet, only be you patient, and wait upon Him with childlike confidence, and the day shall come when you shall wonder, and be astonished, that there should have been such order in your life when you thought it was all confusion, such love when you thought it unkindness, such gentleness when you thought it severity, such wisdom when you were wicked enough to impugn the rightness of your God.

Brethren, the events of our history march on as rightly as a victorious legion under a skillful leader. Do not let us arraign the wisdom of that which happens to us, or fancy that we could order our affairs in better style. Our good and ill, our joy and grief, all keep their places. "Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk everyone in his path."

II. But we must rise still higher. We have come from the world of matter to the world of living creatures, and up to the world of intellectual beings, and NOW LET US THINK OF GOD HIMSELF.

We may say of all His attributes that "neither does one thrust another, but each one walks in his path." Let us be careful at any time in thinking of God, that we indulge not in reflections upon one attribute to the forgetting of the rest. Many Christians are much soured in their disposition by considering God only in the light of sovereignty.

Now, that He is a Sovereign, is a great, deep, mysterious, but also most blessed truth, and we would defend divine sovereignty with all our might against all comers, but at the same time, absolute sovereignty is not the only attribute of God, and those who keep their eye fixed upon that, to the exclusion of all other qualities and prerogatives, get an ill-balanced idea of God, and very likely they fall into errors of doctrine, and more likely still, they become hardhearted towards their fellow men, and forget that the Lord hath no pleasure in the death of sinners, but desires rather that they should turn unto Him and live.

On the other hand, many injure their minds very greatly by reflecting solely upon the one thought of God, that He is good. It is a blessed truth that He is good and benevolent, and full of compassion, and Holy Scripture tells us that "the LORD is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works." God forbid that we should seek to diminish the kindness of God, or think lightly of it, "for his mercy endureth forever."

Yet some look at that one emerald ray as though it were the whole of the spectrum, they gaze upon one star, and regard it as the Pleiades, Orion, and Arcturus, all in one, and alas! worse results follow, for they are tempted to think sin to be a mere trifle, since they ignore the justice and sovereignty of God.

They so exclude God's righteousness and vengeance from their minds so that when they hear of hell, and of the wrath that will come upon the impenitent, they shudder with inward unbelief and try to doubt it, and perhaps, manage to find texts of Scripture which look as if they helped them in their perverted and jaundiced view of the Most High. They think they are glorifying God, but they are really dishonoring Him, for God is no more altogether mercy than He is altogether sovereignty, and He is no more altogether sovereignty than He is altogether mercy.

The fact is that every glory meets in God. All that is good, and excellent, and great, may be found in Him in complete perfection. God would have you so to think of Him, for in the atonement, which is His grandest revelation of Himself, He has been pleased to show you—

*"How grace and justice strangely join;
Piercing His Son with sharpest smart,
To make the choicest blessings thine."*

This leads me on a step further, to observe that *the same order is perceptible in the doctrines of the Word of God*. Doctrines, which look as if they contradicted each other, are nevertheless fully agreed. It

is the defect in our mental vision which makes separate truths appear to cross each other's orbit, for it is certain that the truths of Scripture do not thrust each other, but each one goeth on in its own path. Perhaps the fiercest of fights has been waged over the great fact that salvation is of grace and the equally certain fact that man is responsible to God under the Gospel, and that, if he perishes, his ruin lies at his own door, and is not to be charged upon God in any sense whatever.

This has been the arena in which intellectual gladiators have fought with each other age after age. If they had stood side by side, and fought the common enemy, they would have done good service, for I believe in my soul that they both hold some truth, and that either of them will hold error unless he will yield something to his rival.

There are some who read the Bible and try to systematize it according to rigid logical creeds, but I dare not follow their method, and I feel content to let people say, "How inconsistent he is with himself!" The only thing that would grieve me would be inconsistency with the Word of God. As far as I know this Book, I have endeavored in my ministry, to preach to you, not a part of the truth, but the whole counsel of God, but I cannot harmonize it, nor am I anxious to do so. I am sure all truth is harmonious and *to my ear* the harmony is clear enough, but I cannot give you a complete score of the music, or mark the harmonies on the gamut, I must leave the Chief Musician to do that.

You have heard of the two travelers who met opposite the statue of Minerva, and one of them remarked, "What a glorious golden shield Minerva has!" The other said, "Nay, but it is bronze." They argued with one another, they drew their swords, they slew each other, and as they fell dying, they each looked up, and the one who said the shield was made of bronze discovered that it had a golden side to it, and the other, who was so bold in affirming that it was gold, found that it had a bronze side too.

The shield was made of two different metals, and the combatants had not either of them seen both sides. It is just so with the truth of God, it is many-sided and full of variety. Grand three-fold lines run through it, it is one yet three, like the Godhead. Perhaps you and I have only seen two of the lines—many persons refuse to see more than one—and there may be a third yet to be discovered, which shall reconcile the apparently antagonistic two, when our eye shall be clarified by the baptism in the last river, and we shall ascend the hill of the Lord to read the truth of God in the light of the celestial city.

However, it is clear that salvation is altogether of grace, and equally clear that if any man perishes, it is not for want of invitations on God's side—honest invitations to come to Christ. We hear our Master saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Some friends are so afraid of that text that they generally quote it "weary and heavy laden," which is not the true reading, the laboring ones are invited to Jesus.

Many such invitations did Christ give, yet did He not also say, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him"? Amid the soft rain of tenderness we hear thundering overhead that solemn truth, "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." As we listen to that thunder, we bow to the sovereignty of God, yet, amid the pauses, we hear the Master say, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," and we also hear Him say, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."

Let us believe both sets of truths, and not oppose ourselves to friends who hold either the one or the other, but seek to bring them to believe both, for as the Bible is true, they are both of them the truth of the living God.

Observation leads me to think that those persons who are willing to hold the whole of revealed truth, are generally Christians of a more active spirit, and more desirous for the conversion of souls than those who contract their minds, and only hold some one or two great theological dogmas. If we will but lay aside our Chinese shoes, and allow our feet to grow as they should, we shall find it far better walking on the road to heaven, and we shall be more ready for any work which our Master may call us to do.

III. Now we turn to THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

Dear friends, you and I who have entered into the kingdom of grace, and have received a life which the worldling cannot understand, (for the carnal mind knoweth nothing of the spiritual life), *must remember that our thoughts, graces, and actions ought all to keep their proper position*, so that it may be said of them, "Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk everyone in his path."

As to our thoughts, we ought to endeavor, as God shall teach us by His Spirit, to keep our thoughts of God's Word in their due harmony. Some brethren, for instance, are altogether doctrinal in their inclinations. Doctrinal study is admirable, may God send us much of it! Yet doctrine is not all that we are taught in the Sacred Word, there are duties and promises also, why despise these?

Then again, other professors of religion are altogether of a practical turn, and while they value James, they depreciate Paul. They do not like an expository sermon, they cannot endure it, but if you give them a precept, they rejoice greatly. They are quite right as far as they go. The Lord send us much more practical Christianity!

But this is not all. There are others who are altogether experiential, and some of these will hear no sermon unless it treats upon the corruption of the human heart, or upon the dark frames of the child of God, others will have no experience but the bright side, you must always preach to them out of the Canticles, inditing the good matter concerning the sweet love of Christ towards His spouse.

Now, each of these forms of preaching is good in its season, but he who would keep close to the Scriptures, and preserve completeness in his thoughts, must weigh well the doctrines, and seek to get a clear view of the covenant of grace, and the economy of salvation, he must study the precepts, and ask the Holy Spirit to give him the fleshy heart, upon which those precepts may be written as upon living tablets, and then he must watch his experience, mourning over inbred sin, but also rejoicing in fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, through whose blood we have the victory.

We must endeavor, as much as possible, to exercise our thoughts upon all the subjects which God has given us to think upon in His Word, and has applied to our hearts by the workings of the Holy Spirit. Where this is done, we shall avoid one thought thrusting another, and each will go in its own path.

I have heard of doctrinal preachers who hated the very sound of the word "duty," I have also heard the practical brother declare that "election" he detested, while the experiential brother has affirmed that the doctrinal preacher was merely "a dead letter man."

Oh, what naughty words for God's children to use to one another—bitter sentences which they only use because they know so little! Shame upon us that we say, "I am of Paul," and "I am of Apollos," and "I am of Cephas," for all these are ours to profit by if we are Christ's. Learn from the doctrinal, learn from the practical, learn from the experiential. Blend the whole together and let not one thrust another, but allow each to go straight on in its own path.

The same should hold good in the graces which we cultivate. The Lord Jesus Christ is pleased to put, by His Holy Spirit, into the hearts of those whom He has saved, certain lovely and precious things, but it is not always easy to get these in due harmony. For instance, I know a brother who is very faithful, he does not mind telling you of your faults, but then, he is not affectionate in spirit, and so he never warns you of your infirmities in a way that does you good. Now, if that brother could get affection to balance his fidelity, what an admirable man he would make!

I remember well another brother who was all affection, and nothing else. He was so affectionate as to be effeminate, and I, poor rough creature as I am, could never bear the sight of him. He always reminded me of a pot of treacle, and his office appeared to be the anointing of everybody he met. If he could but have mixed a little fidelity with his sweetness, he would have been a much better and stronger man. Secker says that Christianity ought first, "to make a man more of a man, and then, more than a man," and so it would if we sought, by the power of the Spirit, to cultivate all the graces.

The beauty of the human countenance does not consist exclusively in having a bright eye, no, the fine eye helps, but all the other features of the face must balance it. A man may have the finest possible forehead, and yet he may be extremely ugly because his other features are out of proportion, so it is with character. Character must have all the graces, but all the graces in harmony.

Take, for instance, the virtue of meekness, it is a lovely thing to be of a meek and quiet spirit, but then, my brethren, how could reforms ever be wrought if all were so meek that they could not speak out against error? Where would you find your Luthers and your Calvins? Meekness must be balanced by the virtue which is its compensating quality, namely, courage. Affection must be strengthened by fidelity. A man must be patient under affliction, but he is not to be so patient as to be idle, he must couple energy with his patience, in order to manifest a practical faith.

When we have each of these, we shall be what Paul and James call "perfect." Then shall we have come to be "entire, wanting nothing," having reached "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Christian men should be men-Christians. If your child should have a rapid growth in its arms, but not in its legs, or if its legs should lengthen, but not its arms, what a strange being it would be! What a monster! It is the growth of each limb in proportion that brings a man to perfection.

So, my brethren, when our heads grow faster than our hearts, it is an ill sign, yet how many know a great deal more than they feel, and criticize much more than they believe! It is also an evil thing when a man's tongue grows bigger than his head, when he has more to say than he knows or does, when, like Mr. Talkative, he can talk about the road to heaven, but makes no progress in it.

The same proportions and balancing should be found in our Christian duties. This is too large and difficult a subject to go fully into now, but we will have a word or two about it. A man is not in his outward action a complete Christian because he is attentive to one duty, for God would have His people attend to all. It will sometimes be a question with you as to how much time should be given to private devotion, how much to family worship, and how much to church worship, and you may easily make great mistakes here.

I recollect a brother, a very excellent man too, who was always at prayer meetings and public services, but unfortunately, being always away from home, his family was so neglected that the sons grew up one after another to be the most precocious specimens of depravity that the parish could exhibit.

We thought, and we hinted as much to our brother, that if he could be at home sometimes to teach the children, whose mother was as neglectful of them as the father was—and so the mischief became doubled—he would be far more in the path of duty than in attending public services to the neglect of family piety, I only wish he had been able to see the propriety of our advice, for he has had to smart for his folly.

It is not often that a man's private devotions obtrude in this way, but I know one professor who used to spend so long a period in private prayer that he neglected his business, and also the assembling of himself with God's people, it was indeed an unusual vice, but it came to be quite a sin in his case. This last is a very unusual fault, and one that I could almost excuse, because it is so unusual, but I recommend far more strongly the careful thinking of how much time is due to God in the closet, how much at the family altar, how much at the prayer meeting and how much to the week night services, for we must give to each according to its due proportion.

Again, the difficulty will often occur to you, my brethren, as to how much is due to diligence in business and how much to fervency in spirit. No one can draw the line for another. Each one must judge for himself, but this must be the law, "Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path."

There may be a season in which you may lawfully give all the hours of the day to business. Your business may require it, and there are junctures with commercial men when to go to week day services, would be almost insanity, they must keep to their work, or else there will come a failure, and then the name of Christ will be evil spoken of.

There will be times too, with working men, when if they were to insist upon coming to the Monday evening prayer meeting, or to the Thursday night lecture, he would be altogether out of the path of duty, there is a demand for labor just at some particular time, and he must obey the call, and he is in the path of duty in so doing. I am afraid that there are not many who fail in that way, but crowds who err in the opposite direction. Some will keep the shop open so late that there is no time for family prayer, and

others will confine their servants so strictly that they can never get out on week nights to hear a sermon. It does not strike the employer's mind that some of the young people would perhaps like to be at the prayer meeting on Monday night, nor will the employer be there himself.

Now, I cannot say to you, you must give so much time to God, and so much to business, you yourself must ask God the Holy Spirit to guide you, but recollect, you must not let one thrust another. It is a good saying of an old divine, "Never bring to God one duty stained with the blood of another." As much as lies in you, give to each distinct duty its due proportion.

There is a greater difficulty still with regard to the arrangement of distinct duties, *when they are likely to run counter to one another*. Here is a servant. His master expects him, after he has entered into an engagement with him, to do such and such unnecessary work on the Sabbath. The young man says, "No, I cannot do that, it is clearly unscriptural, and I must obey God rather than man." But there are certain things which come somewhere between the necessary and the unnecessary, and the servant may properly inquire, "What is my duty?"

You must settle it carefully within your own mind. Have you any sordid or selfish motive for deciding in any particular way? If so, be very cautious how you decide, but seek the Lord's glory, and the Lord's glory alone, and say, "While I am, as a servant, to serve man, yet I am the Lord's free man, and I must walk both as a servant and the Lord's free man, and not forget either."

Sometimes the matter of the conduct of children towards parents has come under our notice. A harsh parent has said, "My children shall not carry out their religious convictions." In such cases we have had occasionally to recommend the child to wait until he has grown a little older, at other times, we have bidden the child break through the parent's evil command, since we cannot hold that the parent can have any right to make his child disobey God.

In the matter of the child's religion, when it is able to judge for itself, it is as free as its parent, and has a right to choose for itself, and while the parent should seek intelligently to guide it, coercion must never be tried. If the parent be ungodly, the child is free from all obedience to wicked commands, and must act then in obedience to a higher Parent, and to a greater law, namely, the law of God.

The like happens, at times, with regard to the husband and the wife. Of course, a good wife continually wishes to do that which will please her husband, and she is happy to be subservient to him as far as may be, but when it comes to a point of conscience, and the two relations clash, the relations of the Heavenly Bridegroom and the earthly husband, it is not always easy to decide upon a fitting course of action, but we may at least be certain that we must not be actuated by selfishness, nor by a desire to avoid persecution, nor to please men, but we must stand on the side of honesty to God, fealty to the King of kings, and a regard for the truth as it is in Jesus.

Do try if it be possible, and I believe it is possible, in every case, to harmonize all your relationships, so that neither one of them shall thrust another, but each shall walk in its own path.

IV. So, brethren, my concluding remark shall be that, as this is to be true in the little commonwealth of the heart and the home, IT OUGHT ALSO TO BE TRUE OF THE CHURCH AT LARGE.

It is a great blessing when the members of the church do not thrust one another, but every one goeth in his own path. *There are different orders of workers, and these must cooperate*. Alas! workers in a Sabbath school do not always agree with one another. Then, workers in Sabbath school are not always so fond of workers in Ragged schools as they might be, and perhaps the workers in Ragged schools may sometimes look down with coldness upon the distributors of tracts. It should never be so.

We are like the different members of the body, and the eye must not say to the foot, "I have no need of thee," neither must the hand say to the ear, "I have no need of thee." Every man must work according to the gift of the Holy Spirit. When a man steps out of his proper office into another, he makes a great mistake, both for himself and for the church at large, and when one brother envies another, and picks holes in his coat, and finds fault with his service, he needs to hear that inspired question, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth." I pray all the bands of workers to maintain a holy unanimity, being of one accord, minding the same thing, provoking one

another to nothing but love and good works, striving for nothing except that they together may promote the glory of the Lord Jesus.

And as it is true in any one church with regard to the laborers, *so it should be also with regard to the different ranks and classes of Christians*. The rich should never say, "We do not want so many poor in the church," neither should the poor man say, "Our minister favors the wealthy, there is more thought of the rich than there is of the poor." There is just as much fault on one side as there is on the other in these things. While we sometimes find the purse-proud man looking down on the poor, it quite as often happens that the poor man takes umbrage where there is no need for it, and is much more wicked in his jealousies than the other in his purse-pride.

Let it never be so among Christians, but let the brother of high degree rejoice that he is exalted, and the poor that he is brought low. We want both, and cannot do without either, and having both in the church, neither should one thrust another, but each should go in his own path.

So with the educated and the uneducated. I have been saddened oftentimes, when I have heard a sneer against a brother who cannot speak grammatically. The brother who *can* speak grammatically, perhaps, does not try to speak at all, and yet he sneers at the other and says, "Well, really, I wonder that such fellows should preach, what is the good of them?" Now, until you have done better than he does, do not find fault with him. God uses him, so surely you ought not to despise him!

The fact is, brethren, that the learned and educated minister is necessary and useful, we have no right to sneer at those who have gone through a College course, and earned a high degree of learning, for they are useful, but on the other hand, who among us hears of such men as Richard Weaver, and Mr. Carter, and others who are laboring among the poor, and dares to despise them?

If I might have my choice, I should prefer to work with them rather than with the fine-spun gentlemen, but still, every man in his own order, each man after his own fashion, let the one take his position and the other take his position, and never say a jealous or an angry word of each other, neither let one thrust another, but each one go straight on in his own path.

So it ought to be with all our churches. In this great city of London, there is no excuse for anything like jealousy among the various Christian churches. If we were to build as many places of worship as would reach, set side by side, from here to London Bridge, on both sides of the road, and without a single house or shop in all the distance, and if we were to put Gospel preachers into them all, I believe they could all be filled without any of them being a hindrance to another, for the millions in this city are so enormous that there is no chance of our being jostled by one another.

We are like fishermen in the deep sea, because there are a hundred boats, they need not any of them come off the worse. If there were fifty thousand boats, they could all be full where the fish are so abundant. Perhaps you say, "I hear Mr. So-and-so, and what a dear man he is!" Very likely he is, but so is somebody else. It would be a great pity if everybody could hear only one man.

It would be a very sad thing if everybody wanted to come to the Tabernacle, for we cannot make it any bigger than it is, and it would be a very wretched thing if everybody wanted to go somewhere else, for then we should have an empty house, but now, each one listening according as his own spiritual taste may guide him, or as his spiritual appetite may dictate to him, we are formed into different communities, which prosper individually, but which would glorify God much more if all disunion were cast aside, and if we sought each other's good, and profit, and edification.

And so, to conclude, it ought to be with the different denominations. I sometimes think that these will continue forever. They are of no hurt to the church of God, but a great blessing, for some of them take up one point of truth which is neglected, and others take up another, and so, between them all, the whole of truth is brought out, and it seems to me that the church of Christ is even more one than if all the various sections were brought together into one grand ecclesiastical corporation, for this would probably, feed some ambitious person's vanity, and raise up another dynasty of priestcraft, like the old Babylon of Rome.

Perhaps it is quite as well as it is, but let each body of Christians keep to its own work, and not sneer at the work of others. Let all feel, "We have this to do, and we will do it in the name of God." Let each body of Christians try to correct its neighbor in its errors and mistakes, but let each work hand in hand, and stand foot to foot in the common battle and the common service, for O my brethren, the time will come when our little narrow jealousies will all melt away like the hoar frost when the sun arises! When the King shall come in His glory, or we are carried to the other side of the stream of death, and see beyond the curtain which parts us from the invisible world, we shall look with very different eyes upon some things which seem so important now.

We shall then see that God has forbidden us to glory in anything but the cross of Christ, and that the one thing needful, after all, to contend for was, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

Now, may the Lord help us to go straight on in our own paths, not one thrusting another, but all working together for God. And if there are any among us who are not converted, let me remind them that they are out of order, and let me tell them what comes of that. When a man sets himself in opposition to God's laws, they crush him as surely as he is there. Throw yourself from the Monument, and the law of gravitation will not be suspended to save you. Even so, if you are out of order with God, there is no help for it, and your destruction is certain if you remain opposed to Him.

Oh, that you may be led, by divine grace, to get into order with God—to be reconciled unto God by the death of His Son! He tells you the way to get into order. It is this—simply trust Jesus. That is the way to rectify all errors. He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved. May God bless us all with that salvation, for His name's sake! Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.